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RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN MORTALITY AND ASTROLOGICAL SIGN AT BIRTH

- *Something Whimsical for a Change* -

For the most part, health statistics are grim and depressing, for even those signalling progress and hope seem always counterbalanced by signs of new or unresolved strife. We have reported, for example, that North Carolina has made great strides in the area of infant mortality (1); yet we still find ourselves better than only three states (2). We have reported outstanding progress in the area of infectious diseases and malnutrition, showing that some diseases have been eradicated; and we simultaneously point to the emergence of new disease patterns for which we have no cure (3). Again, we examine mortality patterns across the state and allude to North Carolina's "healthy mountains"; but adverse mortality conditions in eastern counties are the focus of the analysis (4). Recently also, we have reported statistical associations between mortality and various everyday facts of life including marital status, socioeconomic conditions and nutritional factors (5-7).

Is it any wonder then that health statisticians might occasionally require some light-hearted research! Such was the case when we sought to determine if births, homicides or suicides are more frequent during the full moon; they are not, according to North Carolina statistics for 1974 (8). Such is the case now as we seek to determine if time and manner of death are statistically associated with signs of the zodiac. Whimsical perhaps, and yet, according to those who know, vulnerability to various health conditions is part of one's horoscope (9).

METHODS AND MATERIALS

Deaths occurring during 1976 are the first for which the North Carolina statistical file includes date of birth. Hence, deaths used in this study are those occurring during 1976 to North Carolina residents, irrespective of place of death, and to nonresidents who died in North Carolina.

Due to the fact that dates of the zodiac signs are fluid and change with the motion of the Sun each year, and in the interest of achieving purity in mortality traits, we have eliminated decedents who were born at the edge, or cusp, of a sign. We also excluded infants (under 1 year of age) since prenatal and environmental factors are likely to influence these events to a decisive extent. Thus, this study includes a total of 31,980 decedents one year or older at death whose birthdates corresponded to the following 3-week intervals: